

Distington Big Local
Distington Community Centre, Church Road, Distington CA14 5TE



Distington Big Local Ltd Board Meeting
Wednesday 19 February 2020, at 10 am
Distington Community Centre

Present: Norma Pritt NP (Chair), Elaine Ismay EI, Josephine Greggain JG, Annette Whitehead AW, Alison Boyd AB, Karen Hodgson KH, Paula Speight PS, Jean Skelly JS, Julia Powley JP, Pete Duncan PD, Ingrid Morris IM and Lindsay Bodman LB (Minutes)

Apologies: Rhoda Robinson RR, Vic Askew VA) Sue Hunter SH, Jason Scott JS and Antoni Logan AL (JS & AL advised that they can only attend evening meetings, NP said she will contact them to discuss)

241.20 Welcome The Chair welcomed everybody

242.20 Conflict of Interests IM and LB – Staffing

243.20 Minutes of Last Meeting Were passed as a true record.

244.20 Date & time of next Board Meeting Tuesday 28 April 2020 at 12 noon.

245.20 Treasurer's Report and Next Big Local Plan JP talked through the report, we have things to pay out of current budget including February and March wages. The projected outgoings for the remaining 3 years of DBL were discussed. Maintenance for the village and Community Chest/Transport Grants will still continue. £30,000 allocated to DCYP. £50,000 set aside for the Community Centre. £10,500 for community events, though some of this will probably be used to fund other things. £5,250 for CASC, £50,000 for the proposed play park on Hinnings Rd as it is looking like this land will be gifted / transferred to Distington Parish Council. We currently need in the region of £35,000 extra for unforeseen land development costs to get us to planning application stage. At present we have £71,000 left from our current plan plus £350,000 in the pot that we have not yet drawn down from Local Trust. If we allow for all that we mentioned we do need a contingency plan for the land. PD – A contingency of £71,000 is OK. JP – more would be good though. We are hoping we will receive another £18,400 of funding from Copeland. Homes England has advised they are currently not in a position to fund more. PD – How likely is it that you can fulfil the play park? This could be a project that the Young People & Family Sub Group to take on with help from PS/JJ. KH – At the recent Parish Council meeting it was advised that due to new legislation that comes into force, the land would be leased for 15 years. There is also concern of land subsidence in that area. We had a discussion about needing a longer lease if we are to help put a play park on the land. IM asked if the Board were happy to submit our next budget plan on the terms discussed. All were in agreement. PD – You can ask for an extension to the existing plan if time constraints exist. PD – Let Local Trust know ASAP. It was agreed that IM should ask for an extension.

Citizens Advice (CAB) Some residents advised that they were unhappy about the decision to stop funding the outreach in Distington. The project will finish on 31 March 2020, when our current funding agreement ends. We are aware that there is upset about CAB stopping in March. IM read out a letter from some users of CAB, stating that they want the service to continue in the village. This included a petition with 97 signatures. Trust has been built up with our CAB advisor. The service has

run for 5 years in the village and has run over several funding agreements. The current one runs out on 31 March 2020. £10,056 is the yearly cost of CAB. They also carry out home visits in the village. However the board has decided that due to budget constraints we can no longer fund CAB outreach in Distington. The service is still available free of charge with the nearest sites being Workington and Whitehaven. A telephone service is also available. Our thanks go to CAB for the service they have provided including their support in setting up the Fareshare Scheme (and support with the Foodbank scheme) in Distington. Building trust and support in the community has greatly helped with this. We will continue to advertise CAB at their other locations.

246.20 Company Structure Trowers and Hamlin (T&H) have commenced their work in getting DBL Ltd converted to a charitable Community Benefit Society. This is ongoing. IM has a phone meeting with T&H on 20 February to discuss the draft rules for our new organisation and has questions to ask. At the last Board meeting it was agreed that any remaining assets and rental income from the land be passed to DPC in order that they can ensure the community continues to benefit from these. It was raised that this may not work as the Parish Council are a statutory body. (Also, the Reading Room Trust, which may have been another option, has disbanded).

247.20 CASC Funding Request CASC has been in touch to request £1,740 of the contingency funding for additional roofing repairs that have now come to light. This has been paid. AB – How's this progressing? PS – It's going well.

248.20 Land Development - Costs Further cost savings needed to be made in order to make the scheme viable. At the meeting on 12 February, a design freeze was agreed in principle (this is subject to Damian carrying out a detailed appraisal following changes that were made, and Housing 21's (H21) approval). HLP will now work on Planning Submission which will hopefully be submitted by 10 March 2020. The scheme comprises 45 apartments and 9 bungalows.

249.20 Land Development – Blocks on Land We are waiting for a volunteer to place them back (blocking access to the land). This still hasn't happened. Local residents and DBL are concerned about people accessing the land. It is urgent to get it sorted. IM to ring Lawsons. (UPDATE: since the Board meeting the blocks have put back in place, our thanks to G & AM Lawson Ltd for carrying this out).

250.20 Land Development - Drainage of Land Negotiations regarding easement for drainage (for the flats) to go through Chapel Street are still ongoing. One of the owners of this land will not consider granting easement until the scheme has had full planning approval. They have concerns about the height of the flats and potentially being overlooked.

If the owner refuses easement and the drainage needs to be directed elsewhere, there will be cost implications. PD – H21 could pick these costs up. IM – We are at negotiation stage. Our Lawyer (MB) is in conversation with the above owner.

251.20 Land Development - Mineral Rights As the land owner, DBL will need to pay for indemnity insurance against mineral rights on the land. We are currently waiting for advice on how much this will cost. This is the sort of thing we need contingency money for.

252.20 Land Development – Partnering with a Registered Provider and Rent Levels Damian, Rebecca from H21 and IM had a meeting with Julie Friend (Housing and Strategy and Development Officer for Copeland Borough Council, CBC). CBC are fully behind the scheme and advised that rent levels in the region of what they are now for the H21 scheme in Whitehaven (at John Gaskell Court) would be fine. Given the fact that our scheme is innovative and includes design for dementia, it would not be unreasonable to need a slightly higher level of rent to make it viable. This was a very positive meeting.

JS – What are the rent levels? IM – they will be Social Housing level rents. PS – Where do you apply to for a home? IM – It will be through the Registered Provider / Housing Association, H21 or similar. AB – Extra points will be awarded to Distington residents. PD – Yes, priority for people living here. We are in the process of agreeing Head of Terms with H21. A long term lease agreement will follow in due course but this will take time.

253.20 Village Maintenance RH reported that following the removal of the seat in Hinnings Road bus stop, the problem of mess and litter has greatly improved. The wreaths in the church yard need disposed of. Unfortunately, we have not been able to get an agreement to use the landfill site at Lillyhall. PS – How about a permit? RH tried but it's not straight forward. IM – this means that we can't operate any tip runs. Mower blades for the Kubota need replacing and will cost in the region of £150, though RH might be able to get them cheaper. **Board approved the £150 spend on mower blades.** PS – Does the village book a lot of maintenance jobs with RH? IM – Yes, and especially busy over summer. Plus RH carries out lots of general village maintenance. He also completes jobs such as rebuilding the church wall, cuts the rugby pitch and football pitch (they are charged for these jobs but it is heavily subsidised by DBL). RH will be a big miss when DBL finishes.

Board members asked if RH wanted to run a maintenance business after DBL finished as there is the need for it. RH has been asked previously but does not seem to want to. Perhaps it is worth asking again? Maybe someone else would want to do it?

JP – We need to discuss about employing a Maintenance Worker over summer to help RH with the workload. We will discuss this issue under Staffing.

254.20 Local Trust Workers Event IM attended the event in Manchester on 6 February which was useful and informative. Matt Leach, Local Trust Chief Executive, gave a talk in which he highlighted the work of 6 or 7 Big Locals. DBL and our Land Development project was one of those.

255.20 Big Local Connects 2020 This will be held on 10-11 July 2020 in Nottingham. IM asked which Board members would like to attend. No one put their name forward.

256.20 Computer in the Library We are hoping to get one (free of charge) from Cumbria Exchange. No reply to initial request so LB requested it be re-advertised. It was re-advertised on 18 February.

257.20 Men's Group RR's daughter in law, who is qualified in this field through work, has kindly agreed to help with the risk assessment for this group's activities by providing relevant documents and support.

258.20 New Colouring Project This will start on Monday 24 February 2020 1-3pm in Mabel Knowles room. Margaret Hilldrop (MH) is supporting this. The plan is to move it to the hall if it grows. The main idea behind it is a cuppa/crack/company and relaxing through colouring and mindfulness. (UPDATE: since the Board meeting the first Colouring Group has been held. Only MH turned up. We will continue to advertise in an around the community and local groups).

259.20 FareShare The 11 February FareShare session had to be cancelled. Due to poor weather conditions, no food was brought up to our area from the warehouse in Preston. Volunteers still attended and were able to pass on emergency food supplies from their stock cupboard to those in need.

260.20 History Pin Alternative We are still hoping to run this project with an alternative partner. KH and DCYP are keen to take this forward. Any associated costs will be quite low. The History Society might like to be involved and DCYP were keen to get involved. **ACTION:** LB to chase Local Trust again.

261.20 IT Support Our contract with System IT is up for renewal on 29 February 2020. A 12 month contract is £374.50 plus VAT or a 24 month contract is the same price PER ANNUM with no price increase over the 2 year period. JP – Do they offer good service? IM – Yes. **The Board approved the 24 month contract.**

262.20 Staffing – Inflationary Pay Increase IM reported that there has been no pay increase in line with inflation since DBL began employing staff. IM – Does the Board wish to consider a pay increase in line with inflation? IM and LB left the meeting. Discussions were held on staff pay increases, these are confidential. Notes taken are held by the Chair & Vice Chair of the Board. IM and LB returned to the meeting.

263.20 Staffing – Other Issues IM is on leave 3 & 4 March and 20 - 30 March 2020. RH is on leave 9-24 March 2020.

264.20 DBL Grants The last Grants Panel awarded £500 to OAP Reunion from the Transport Grant and £500 to OAP Reunion from the Community Chest. The next closing date for the grants is 7 April 2020. The Grants Panel meet on 14 April 2020. The question was asked if Distington Community School can apply for a grant to help pay for a sensory area for children with autism and other special needs (eg used for calming with pupils with emotional difficulties). This would benefit many children. We can't fund things that school have a statutory obligation to provide but as they do not get funding for the above they are able to apply for our grants. **ACTION: LB to inform the person who made the inquiry** (Action completed on 20/2/20).

265.20 Any Other Business The Defibrillator has recently had a new lock fitted which has now stopped working properly. LB/VA to keep chasing. (UPDATE: Since the last meeting the Defibrillator has been taken out of action and the Engineer cannot visit until the end of week commencing 24 February.)

PD – If possible we need to try to recruit men to the Board as 50% of the community are not represented. Since our last AGM we have had 2 men joining the Board, one of whom has attended some meetings. We have had male Board members in the past, the latest member left due to relocation to a different area. All to reflect on this, it is not easy to recruit new members.

Meeting Dates

Young People & Families Group – Wednesday 26 February 2020, 6:30pm at DCYP
Land Development Group – 10 March 2020 at 10:30 am at Distington Community Centre
The next Grants Panel meeting takes place on 14 April 2020

Date of next Board Meeting: Tuesday 28 April, 12 Noon